

Acro Facts

Scientific name

Acrocanthosaurus atokensis. *Acrocanthosaurus* is Greek for “high-spined lizard,” after the extremely long spines along the top of the vertebrae of this dinosaur’s back, hips, and tail. The species name, *atokensis*, comes from Atoka County, Okla., where the dinosaur was found. Named by J. Willis Stovall and Wann Langston, Jr. in 1950, paleontologists often refer to the animal as “Acro.”

Time

Early Cretaceous period, about 110 million years ago. (45 million years earlier than *Tyrannosaurus rex*.)

Group

Allosauroids: members are three-fingered, two-legged meat-eaters.

Size

The largest predator of its time: 40 feet long, 13 feet tall (measuring from the ground to the top of the pelvis), weighing 5,280 pounds (2.6 tons). Comparable in size to *T. rex*.

Physical details

Unusually prominent vertebral spines run from back to tail. Head measures 4 1/2 feet long, 3 feet high and 2 feet wide. Its jaw houses 68 thin, knife-like teeth. Eyes face to the side, meaning Acro cocked its head on one side to examine its prey. Each 3-foot arm ends in three sharp, wickedly curved claws used to tear flesh from bones.

Rarity

Known from only four specimens. The Museum’s specimen is by far the most complete, with 54 percent of the bones represented. Not until discovery of this specimen were scientists able to determine the general appearance of this dinosaur. Sediments containing its remains are not well exposed, making it likely that Acro will remain rare.

Feeding

The only giant carnivore of its time, Acro preyed on dinosaurs larger than itself. Fossilized footprints show that it ran alongside its prey and then lunged, using its strong forelimbs to grip its prey.

Range and Habitat

Fragmentary Acro remains have been discovered in Oklahoma and Texas, as well as a few teeth in Maryland. Similar climatic conditions in these regions during the early Cretaceous period, as well as other fossil discoveries, suggest that Acro ranged across the low, flat coastal plains of the Southeast.

Comparison to *T. rex*

About the same length as *T. rex*, not quite as tall, one to two tons lighter. Acro possessed a less muscular, narrower skull than *T. rex* and had longer, more powerful forelimbs and shorter hind limbs. Its thinner teeth were used for tearing meat from bones, while *T. rex*’s thicker teeth could crush bones.

Acro belonged to a different family of dinosaurs, unrelated to the ancestry of *T. rex*.

